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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

POLAND: Prospects for Renewed Unrest

The next two weeks will be a volatile period in Poland. Discontent has increased, Solidarity has called for renewed opposition, and important religious celebrations will attract large crowds. Although demonstrations are not likely to be widespread, sporadic unrest could lead to serious clashes with the police. Some protests could occur as early as today, which marks eight months of martial law.

The regime will use whatever force is necessary to keep the situation under control.

Militancy seems to be on the rise. Frustrations have been building over steadily declining living standards and tight martial law restrictions. The regime's failure to relax martial law restrictions significantly or to allow the papal visit in August has heightened discontent.

Solidarity activists and apparently some rank-and-file adherents are angry over the regime's refusal to allow Solidarity any role. Union sources claim sentiment for protest actions is strong throughout the country.

Solidarity and the Church

The underground leadership of Solidarity has called for two weeks of peaceful protests culminating in a large demonstration on 31 August to commemorate the second anniversary of the union's founding. Well-placed sources report the leaders want to prove the union is still a political force to be reckoned with while restraining the militancy they see in the factories. They reluctantly called for the demonstrations to maintain their credibility with workers.

Solidarity's move to renew protest activity reverses its decision in July to suspend agitation in the hope that the regime would relax martial law and allow the

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13 August 1982

Approved for Release
Date AUG 1999

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Pope to visit this month. Union leaders also realized many workers had been intimidated by the regime's harsh measures following earlier protests. [REDACTED]

Solidarity leaders still do not agree on how far to go in resuming protest activity. They believe calling a general strike--their ultimate weapon--would be premature, because the union is not ready for a confrontation. Others insist strike planning should proceed, if only as a tactic to exact concessions from the authorities and to help reestablish the union's communications. [REDACTED]

Discussions of a general strike appear to have prompted some factories--especially in Gdansk on the Baltic coast--to proceed independently with their own strike plans for later this month. Some local strikes are likely. [REDACTED]

Leaders of the Catholic Church are concerned about the possibility of violence but have not hesitated to blame the regime publicly for the delay of the papal visit. They are going ahead with the traditional pilgrimage to the southern city of Czestochowa and with the celebration of the 600th anniversary of Poland's most sacred icon. Both events will draw large crowds--including large numbers of young people--full of nationalist fervor. [REDACTED]

The Church seems likely to keep criticism of the government within bounds and control the large crowds. On the other hand, there almost certainly will be some outbursts against martial law. [REDACTED]

The Regime's Strategy

Premier Jaruzelski seems satisfied with the superficial calm he has imposed through intimidation but remains concerned over Solidarity's potential power. In making only token concessions last month, however, he may have misjudged the popular mood and failed to grasp the extent to which expectations were raised by the Church and by moderates in the regime as they urged more conciliatory policies. [REDACTED]

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The government continues to portray the union's leaders as a small group of militants with little support and has contemptuously dismissed the union's calls on the population to oppose the regime. The recent crack-down on Solidarity activists involved in printing leaflets and newspapers, however, indicates a new sense of apprehension in the government. More such actions are likely to thwart union militants and to intimidate would-be demonstrators.

Jaruzelski will not hesitate to use force to counter protests. The authorities recently have been circumspect when faced with demonstrations and probably will not interfere directly with the religious observances.

The government will respond if provoked or if demonstrations appear to be escalating. The riot police could overreact and turn peaceful demonstrations into violent clashes--as they have in the past.

Outlook

Widespread unrest seems unlikely, but there could be enough incidents to prompt strong repressive measures. The regime has deployed enough security forces to maintain order. Should local disorders threaten to spread, the authorities would not hesitate to cut off communications, reimpose other restrictions, and quickly mobilize additional security units.

Jaruzelski remains committed to a lengthy period of stringent military rule. A new round of disorders would make the regime more uneasy and would prompt it to place an even higher priority on coercion, further widening the gap between the government and the people. Jaruzelski believes, nevertheless, that time is on his side and that he can eventually wear down resistance.

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